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MEMO to the File

DATE: October 26, 1966

FROM: []

RE: Heine v. Raus -- Interview with Ilmar Veskimets

Beginning about 10 a.m. on October 25, I interviewed Mr. Veskimets in the office of Donald Keith in Toronto. During the first 3/4 of an hour, Mr. Keith's son, Tony, also participated in the interview. Thereafter, we were joined by his father, so that either two or three of us were present at all times during the interview, in addition to Mr. Veskimets.

I was quite impressed with Veskimets. Although he has a kind of peasant exterior, he spoke quite carefully and seemed to have good judgment. He did not rush into decisions, he was quite frank when he could not remember things, and he did not hesitate to disagree whenever he felt like it.

I will not repeat here the parts of his story that Tom LaVenia has already detailed in his own report. Instead, I will answer the questions about Veskimets that were posed to me on the phone, along with additional information about Heine.

1. Veskimets' Activities While a Member of the Security Police under the Germans

When Veskimets joined the security police in 1941, he was first an assistant, then a senior assistant and finally the head of a "section" in Tartu. Tartu at that time was made up of three sections for purposes of security. When Veskimets became the head of his section,

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he had about 13 people working for him. His job was to investigate and question anyone who seemed to have any background of cooperation with the communists. This included many Estonians who had gone to Russia in 1940 and who were now returning to Tartu. His job, in other words, was to make sure that the various industries of Tartu, its government and its transportation system were all secure from communist agents and sympathizers. During this period Veskimets had, successively, three bosses, each of whom was the head of the security section before Veskimets himself became head. The first was Elmar Reimo. He died some years ago. It was to Reimo that Veskimets reported the information detailed below about Colonel Bassen-Spiller and Heine. Reimo was succeeded by Artur Paal. Veskimets believes that Paal is now in Australia, although he does not know where. Veskimets thinks that Paal may well have more information about Heine than Veskimets himself. Paal in turn was succeeded by Pores Juht. He is now living in New York City (although Veskimets does not have his address). Since Juht dealt primarily with Germans, he is not as likely to have information about Heine. However, he might well know the location of Johannes Suvando, who was in charge of the files in Tartu and who therefore may have information about Heine. Veskimets himself has no idea where Suvando is now.

Soon after becoming head of the section in Tartu, Veskimets was also given a second job. He was made head of the counter-intelligence branch for the entire province of Tartu. He and about three others carried on this work alone. His job here was to collect information from spies who came to Estonia from Russia. These spies would be arrested either by the local police or by the Germans and then turned over to Veskimets. Most of them came in by parachute. They received

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training in Russia from four to six months and then came to Estonia either singly or in groups of up to 50 at a time.

On February 1, 1944, Veskimets was transferred to Lviljanti and made deputy head of the branch. His duties were a combination of everything he had been doing theretofor, except he now covered the entire province of Lviljanti. The head of the branch at that time was Harman Ups. When Ups was transferred to Tallinn, Veskimets became head of the branch. He left Estonia on September 22, 1944.

Veskimets claimed that he wore civilian clothes rather than a uniform during this entire period, and that he gained the confidence of those he interrogated rather than torturing them or using force.

2. Those Who Might Know About Heine

None other than those discussed above and below.

3. Any Clues as to Looke's Whereabouts

Veskimets is not at all clear on this subject. He thinks it is doubtful whether Looke is still alive. The Germans wanted to shoot him as soon as possible, whereas Veskimets wanted to save him as long as he could so as to obtain even more information from him. At one point, Looke may have agreed to become a double agent. In any event, in 1943 he was taken to Tallinn and then subsequently sent to Germany. Veskimets thinks that he would have been shot if he had not become a double agent and that only if he did become a double agent would he be alive today. He has never heard from or about him since. This is an area, however, that a trained interrogator might want to delve into with Veskimets in more detail, since it seemed to me that he was unusually vague on this subject.

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4. Details on Three Men

Ain Mere is now in England. He was an Estonian flying officer (a major) who became head of the Estonian security police under the Germans and who at one point seems to have been Veskimets' boss. He was sentenced to death by the Russians in absentia.

Erwin Viks was an Estonian political police officer until 1940, investigating Russian spies before the War. He was briefly head of the security police under the Germans in Tartu in 1941 and then was transferred to Tallinn. He was, like Mere, sentenced to death by the Russians in absentia. He is now living in Australia.

Edward Uduste was a province police officer until 1940, when he was fired. From 1941 to 1944 he was Viks' deputy in Tallinn. He now lives in Montreal. Veskimets met him briefly in Germany in 1945 but has not seen him in Canada.

5. Query as to Why Heine Wasn't Arrested or Executed by the Germans

Answered below.

6. Veskimets' Brother, Lembit

Veskimets said that his brother was not in the police system. He was a businessman who was drafted into the Estonian Army in April of 1944. He attended Bad Toltz from April until August of 1944. Lembit once told his brother he did not remember Heine at Bad Toltz, nor did he believe Heine's story about his exploits. However, he had no concrete information about Heine.

7. Heine's Wife

Veskimets has no information about her.

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General Discussion of Heine

About 10,000 Estonians of German background were in Estonia in 1939. In 1940 and 1941 many of these persons went back to Germany after a German commission came to Tartu to establish their connections. There were 615 Russian agents in Estonia at the time, and many of the Estonians going to Germany were "hired" as Soviet secret agents. One of the NKVD men captured by the Germans was Serge Looke. Looke was interrogated by Veskimets and told him about a number of Soviet agents, including a Col. Bassen-Spiller, about whom he had quite a bit of information. He also mentioned Heine, about whom he seemed to have very little information. Bassen-Spiller had been a colonel in the Estonian Cavalry Regulars and was well-known in Tartu. He was hired as a secret agent by the Russians and sent to Germany. When he arrived there, however, he gave himself up to the German police, revealing to them that he had been hired by the Russians.

Heine had been known as a young but ardent anti-communist. Heine had been arrested by the Russians, and according to Looke an "understanding" had been reached whereby Heine would work for the Russian secret police. Veskimets said that while Heine claims to have been held in custody for many months during this initial period, it was Veskimets' understanding that Heine was hired, released, hired again and then sent to Germany. He apparently was hired at least originally for the specific purpose of being a Soviet agent in Germany. Veskimets cannot explain why Heine was not at least arrested when he went to Germany, since the Germans (through Veskimets and others) had information to the effect that he was a Soviet agent. Veskimets implied that his information about Heine was not very explicit and that Heine was not

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regarded as being of much importance. But Veskimets also raises the possibility that Heine, like Bassen-Spiller, may have escaped death by turning himself over to the German police when he arrived in Germany. The only thing that is clear is that Veskimets himself did not follow up on Heine in any way.

Veskimets has no other definite information about Heine. He does feel, however, that Heine's story fails to ring true (he describes the escape from the Urals as virtually impossible, for example). He also sees in the stories the thread of a fairly typical Soviet operation. He has avoided Heine in Canada. However, he did mention to three succeeding presidents of the Estonian Central Council that in his opinion they should be very cautious about trusting Heine. These three were Mihkel Hansen, Johannes Muller (a former minister of justice in Estonia) and Axel Luitsalu. Luitsalu was succeeded by Parkma.

The only other name that Veskimets could think of was Artur Eisma, who was secretary of the security police under the Germans and who at one time was in Australia with Viks. He may be deceased by now.

Miscellaneous Information

(a) A young man named Uno Kingissepp went to Russia with a group of Estonians about seven years ago but split off from the group and visited his father in Estonia. He apparently had no trouble in getting into and out of Estonia since he had no background of anti-Soviet activity. When Uno returned to Canada, Heine got up at a meeting and roundly denounced the boy, saying that no one should have anything to do with Estonia. Heine went so far as to say that Uno should be thrown out of the Boy Scouts. Uno now lives in Port Arthur.

(b) Dr. Trass said that at one point the Council had a group of anti-communist books set up at the Estonian house. Trass noted that among the books was a Birch-like one condemning fluoridation. Trass stated at the meeting that he thought this book was not really an anti-communist one and should not be on display. Heine leaped up, banged the chair with his fist, and shouted that fluoridation was a communist plot and the book should remain on display.

(c) Keith talked to three members of the jury after the Tarum case was dismissed. All three said that they were prepared to throw the book at Tarum. One of them told Keith that he probably should not have served on the jury because he knew Tarum and thought he was "a bloody communist".

(d) Keith is convinced that whoever mailed out the four anonymous bulletins was using the subscription list of "Our Life", a weekly newspaper distributed to the Estonian community. Keith points out that in several instances, people who had received one anonymous bulletin at one address and who had then informed "Our Life" of a change of address, thereafter received the next bulletin at their new address. The interesting thing about this is that Jurima is an accountant for "Our Life", and Urm is one of the major stockholders. Heine, Jurima and Urm all resigned from the Council at the same time. Heine told us in his deposition that his mother has rented a room from Jurima since 1962 and that Heine himself rented a room from Urm for five years after his marriage. Keith points out that a number of people had to be involved in the distribution of the anonymous bulletins, since one bulletin shows on its face that it was distributed to 3,000 Estonians, and the sequence of events dictates that all of the envelopes had to be addressed over the course of a day or two. I saw

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about six of the envelopes in which bulletins were sent. All but one were typed; the one was written in what seemed to be an Estonian longhand.

(e) While Donald and Tony Keith and I were talking to Parkma and Trass at Keith's house on Monday evening, October 24, Trass received a call from Harry Landra. I was somewhat surprised, since Landra was the attorney who acted on Heine's behalf in trying to settle the Raus matter before it came to trial. Trass said Landra was a friend of very long standing who has become disillusioned with Heine and who now passes along tips and bits of information in connection with his own case. It was Landra who first suggested Keith's name to Trass. Keith, however, does not know Landra and says that Landra must have gotten his name from a mutual friend.

(f) Parkma and Trass emphasized that Heine did not seem to take an active part in Estonian meetings and in fact always seemed to have some excuse for not attending all of the meetings and taking on assignments. At the same time, Heine seemed to be in the background whenever any difficulties or acrimony arose. The chief impression that Parkma and Trass have of Heine is that he loves publicity. Once, when he expressed an opinion about a subject at a Council meeting, he demanded that the newspapers be informed of what his position was. Parkma, Trass and Veskimets all pointed out that many Estonians had had remarkable experiences in fighting against the Russians but they had not gone around exploiting them the way Heine has done.

(g) Tarum's defense at first was that he distributed bulletin no. 1 and that since he distributed it only at a council meeting he enjoyed a qualified privilege. This defense soon broke down when he

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testified that he received a bundle on his porch, called his neighbor to come over and help him open it in case it was a bomb, discovered the bulletins inside, and let his neighbor take about 20 of them home with him. Bulletins 1, 2 and 3 were all charged in the complaint.

Bulletin 4 was later introduced in evidence after the judge at first ruled it out and then allowed it in. There is an interesting story about this fourth bulletin. On December 31, 1964, the Estonian House was being prepared for a party the next day. Toward evening, a number of large balloons were put on the ceiling so that they could fall the next day at the party. The man who came in early the next morning to complete the arrangements noticed something white on top of one of the balloons. He got a ladder and found a whole pile of bulletins no. 4 on top of the balloon, apparently arranged so that they would fall among the guests when the balloon descended. In other words, someone with a key to the building had come in during the night and put the bulletins on the balloon.

I am attaching the complaint against Tarum, a memo about Heine written by Parkma, an English translation of bulletin no. 4 (the first three are in the complaint), three stories about the case in the Canadian papers, and the second story on Heine in the Telegram. Keith is now obtaining for us the entire transcript of the five days of trial, plus Tarum's brief testimony on deposition. Incidentally, Keith intends to take Heine's deposition prior to the new trial in January, and we agreed that either Paul Connolly or I would come to Toronto prior to the deposition but after he and his son have had a chance to digest the material which I left with him. He Xeroxed Heine's entire deposition and our entire pleading file.